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common name as *Roman fennel*, the same as Albertus Magnus used in the thirteenth century. It is classed among culinary herbs by Laurembergius[1] in 1632, and in America by McMahon[2] in 1806.

In the seventeenth century Quintyne[3] records the use of the leaves in salads. The seeds now serve to flavor various liqueurs; in Italy they appear in diverse pastries; in Germany they are put into bread; in England, in special bread, in rye bread, and even in cheese.[4] In Malta, localities in Spain, France, Southern Italy, Germany, and Russia the plant is grown on a large scale for the seed, which enters commerce for use in flavoring medicines, etc. It is also grown in Northern India and Chili.

The plant is indigenous to Asia Minor, the Greek islands, and Egypt, but is nowhere to be met with undoubtedly growing wild; and I have found no indication of its having formed varieties under cultivation, except that Bauhin records one sort having rounder and smaller seeds than the common.

(To be continued.)

EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: E. D. COPE AND J. S. KINGSLEY.

In all of our four hundred colleges and universities, with a dozen conspicuous exceptions, the instruction in the biological sciences is but little more than a farce. College presidents and trustees seem to think that while some special knowledge is necessary for teaching the classics and mathematics, any one is competent to give instruction in botany and zoology. Indeed, it would even appear that they regard eminence as an investigator in either of these branches as an undesirable feature in an instructor. The teachers of biology are mostly men without biological training, men whose ideas and methods are those of a generation ago, and who have no more idea of modern science and modern scientific thought than have the poorest of the pupils who are unfortunate enough to come under them. Their whole idea of botany is "analysis," while zoology is but cut-and-dried classification. This is true not only of most Western institutions, but of many in the East as well. It was in one of the latter that the students of zoology were treated to three solid months of worms, while, for aught the professor said, they were left in absolute ignorance of the existence of the groups of protozoa and vertebrates. Too frequently ministers and lawyers are installed as professors of natural history. Neither have had the training necessary to fit them for the position, but they are graduates of the college, and must be taken care of. Those in authority do not seem to realize that the professional studies of a clergyman, instead of fitting one for a student of nature, are a positive hindrance. The whole theological training lies in the lines of faith and reverence for authority, while science demands of its devotees, if not a sceptical spirit, one of complete independence. One cannot rely upon any statement solely on the grounds that it is advanced by a Cuvier or an Agassiz. Science has no infallible gospel wherewith to settle all disputes except that presented by the book of nature, and how difficult this is of interpretation only the original investigator knows. The lawyer or the clergyman, when he enters the field of science, brings his traditions and his old methods of thought with him. He looks for the written accounts as he formerly turned to his Bible or his "Blackstone," and when he finds any statement in print, he pins his faith to it as unquestionably as he did to the other authorities in the days of yore.

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[1] Laurembergius, Hort., 1632, 193.

[2] McMahon, Am. Gard. Kal., 1806.

[3] Quintyne, Complete Gard., 1693.

[4] Joigneaux, Traité des Graines, 146.

Were this selection of incompetent instructors a matter of necessity it would not speak well for American science; but it is not. We have in our country an abundance of able students, but, strange to say, it is the exception, rather than the rule, to find our best workers occupying professors' chairs. This results not from any disinclination for teaching on the part of these students, but from the stupidity of our college officers, who, if offered the choice between excellence and mediocrity, almost invariably choose the latter.

When the Society of American Naturalists was formed, one of the objects proposed was a reform in this respect; but so far nothing has been accomplished in this direction. How to proceed in changing this state of affairs may be a question, but it is to be hoped that in the early future some steps may be taken which will tend to improve the character of instructors and instruction. A list of eligible persons, with accounts of their work, etc., might be prepared and placed in the hands of a committee, so that those in search of a professor might know from whom to select, while a few protests sent to college trustees, on making an eminently unfit nomination, might bear some good fruit.

GENERAL NOTES.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.[1]

America. ALASKA.—On his way to Mount St. Elias, Lieutenant Schwatka crossed an unknown river, which, at eight miles from its mouth, is said to be a mile in width, and to flow at a rate of ten miles an hour. It was named Jones River. A glacier twenty miles wide was seen by the explorers. It extended fifty miles along the base of the St. Elias Alps, and was named the Agassiz Glacier. Another to the west was called the Guyot Glacier, while a third was named in honor of Professor Tyndall. They then ascended Mount St. Elias to a height of seven thousand two hundred feet above the snow-line. Glaciers were seen rising, sometimes perpendicularly, to heights varying from three hundred to three thousand feet, and enormous crevasses were frequent. Three peaks, varying from eight thousand to twelve thousand feet, were seen, and named Cleveland, Whitney, and Nicholls.

THE SOURCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI.—The controversy concerning Lake Glazier has been a long one. *Science* (August 13) prints a letter by Russell Hinman, giving copies of Schoolcraft's map, and those of Nicollet, 1843; the Land Office, 1879; and Glazier, 1881. He also gives, in parallel columns, the language used by Schoolcraft (1832) and that of Glazier (1881). Nicollet's map shows three small lakes in the position of Glazier's single one. The similarity of the words has, of course, no weight as evidence concerning a geographical fact, though it may be explained by facts occurring in similar order. Pearce Giles (*Science*, September 24) endeavors to prove that the lakelets or ponds on Nicollet's map have nothing to do with the source of the river, and that those surveyed, mapped, and named by the Land Office were mere lakelets, and not identical with Lake Glazier.

Captain Glazier's claim to discovery seems, however, to be completely disposed of by the letter of H. D. Harrower in *Science* (October 8). Mr. Harrower gives a map reduced from *fac-simile*

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[1] Edited by W. N. LOCKINGTON, Philadelphia.